

VZCZCXRO3957
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DE RUEHKT #1028/01 1431254
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 231254Z MAY 07
FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6031
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 5751
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 6060
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 1290
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 4084
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5365
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1485
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 3496
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2695
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 001028

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/23/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IN](#) [PTER](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: FORMER PM: "EVERYONE IS KEEPING MUM"

REF: KATHMANDU 907

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

11. (C) On May 23, former Prime Minister and President of the Rastriya Janashakti Party (National People's Power Party) (RJP) Surya Bahadur Thapa told the Ambassador that King Gyanendra had no intention to step down. Thapa had told Gyanendra that it might be wise to abdicate in order to "preserve" the monarchy. According to Thapa, Gyanendra did not respond to this suggestion. Thapa also opined to the Ambassador that Home Minister Sitaula was neither able nor willing to address the law and order situation as he still identified first and foremost with his role as chief negotiator to the Maoists. Thapa reasserted his view that the Government of India needed to take a more positive role in Nepal's politics because the next six months -- until the projected November Constituent Assembly election -- would be a critical transition period for Nepal (reftel).

Thapa Argues To Preserve the Monarchy

12. (C) On May 23, former Prime Minister and President of the Rastriya Janashakti Party (National People's Power Party) (RJP) Surya Bahadur Thapa relayed to the Ambassador his recent (reportedly May 17) discussions with King Gyanendra on the subject of abdication. Thapa had suggested that Gyanendra step down in order to "preserve the institution" of the monarchy. Thapa had argued that the public viewed the monarchy as a stabilizing force in Nepal's politics, but that Gyanendra had lost support with the people. (Note: Thapa also told the Ambassador that he believed Gyanendra had also lost support of the Nepal Army). According to Thapa, Crown Prince Paras was equally unfit to take over from his father, given his many transgressions. Thapa told the Ambassador that Gyanendra had little to say in reaction to Thapa's suggestion and had not indicated that he agreed.

Home Ministry "Keeping Mum"

13. (C) When asked by the Ambassador what his position was on the current security situation, Thapa said he was unhappy

that Home Minister Sitaula had not taken steps to enforce law and order throughout the country. Thapa believed that it had been unwise for Prime Minister Koirala to appoint as Home Minister the same person whom he had tasked to negotiate with the Maoists. The contradictory nature of this situation, Thapa asserted, meant that Home Minister Sitaula was neither willing nor able to stand up to Maoist acts of violence. The Ambassador agreed, noting that Sitaula had had to pick which of his contradictory duties to stress -- and had chosen to focus on keeping the peace with the Maoists.

Indian Message Needs More on Democracy

14. (C) Thapa expressed his frustration to the Ambassador that the Government of India (GOI) had not been as public in its support of multi-party democracy in Nepal since the April 2006 People's Movement toppled the King. Thapa believed that recent GOI statements had been lacking a strong democratic undertone. GOI officials kept repeating the mantra that they would agree with "whatever the Nepali people decide." That was not good enough. Thapa had raised this concern in his recent consultations with Indian officials in New Delhi and hoped that the GOI would take on a more positive role in Nepal's politics during this critical period as the country prepared for an expected Constituent Assembly election in November. Thapa agreed with the Ambassador that the GOI had become more disillusioned with the Maoists as the Young Communist League had ramped up its activity in recent months.

Prime Minister Koirala Needs a Team

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15. (C) Thapa said that PM Koirala did not have a team of advisors who were able to help him address the challenges of the current situation. Sitaula had not helped the PM to develop creative solutions to address the law and order situation. Furthermore, while the Prime Minister had stated that he would take steps to deal with the situation in the Terai, he had not taken any concrete action. Thapa told the Ambassador that he thought there were younger members of the PM's party who would be able to advise Koirala as was necessary, but that Koirala seemed unwilling to seek assistance from anyone outside of his inner circle.

Comment

16. (C) Thapa has a good sense for where the monarchy is headed. He is not alone in encouraging King Gyanendra (and Crown Prince Paras) to abdicate to preserve the institution. Prime Minister Koirala has openly called for the King to abdicate but would probably prefer to see Nepal remain a monarchy if possible. The Chief of Army Staff General Katawal is another important supporter of the continuation of the monarchy who strongly wants Gyanendra to abdicate. Indeed, the number of Gyanendra's supporters is dwindling rapidly. Koirala took down the massive picture of the King and Queen from his office a few months ago now. With respect to the Government of India, we hope its growing disillusionment with the abuses of the Maoist Young Communist League will result in a more outspoken approach to Nepal. As for Home Minister Sitaula, with friends and advisors like that, the Prime Minister does not need enemies.

MORIARTY